

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 SAJ-01 SCEM-02

SCI-06 DRC-01 AF-10 OMB-01 AID-20 CEA-02 COME-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2546

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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 5403

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NL, XF

SUBJECT: EFFECT OF ARAB OIL BOYCOTT ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: IT IS SOMEWHAT EARLY TO ESTIMATE WHAT EFFECT AN EXTENDED ARAB OIL BOYCOTT MIGHT HAVE ON THE DUTCH DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION. AT PRESENT PARTISAN SPIRIT SEEMS SOMEWHAT MUTED AS GON GRAPPLES WITH PROBLEM OF KEEPING COUNTRY GOING DESPTIE OIL SHORT-AGE. IN RECENT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES, THE OPPOSITION (LIBERALS AND CHU) CRITICIZED THE GON'S PRESENTATION OF ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICY, BUT DID NOT CHARGE THAT POLICY IS CAUSE OF BOYCOTT. PRINCIPAL PARTIES IN COALITION (LABOR AND KVP) HAVE INDICATED NOT DESIRE TO CHANGE ITS COMPOSITION. THERE HAVE BEEN RECENT APPEALS IN RIGHT WING MEDIA FOR A "NATIONA GOVERNMENT" WHICH ALLEGEDLY WOULD BE BETTER EQUIPPED TO HANDLE CRISIS BUT THOSE HAVE NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BEEN TAKEN SERIOUSLY. SINCE ORGANIZATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD

PROBABLY NECESSITATE NEW ELECTIONS, NO POLITICAL PARTIES EXCEPT OPPOSITION LIBERALS AND PERHAPS CHU FAVOR SUCH A SOLUTION. AS EMPHASIZED IN PREVIOUS REPORTING, IF OIL BOYCOTT'S EFFECTS AS DISRUPTIVE AS MANY ANTICIPATE, DUTCH ELECTORATE WILL PROBABLY BLAME GOVERNMENT IN POWER FOR THEIR PREDICAMENT, AND SUCH VOTER DISENCHANTMENT COULD TEMPT MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES TO A) REVISE THEIR POSITIONS B) HAZARD NEW ELECTIONS AND C) EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE COALITION ARRANGEMENTS. AS OF NOW, THERE IS NO REPEAT NO INDICATION SUCH PROCESS INS IMMINENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ON DECEMBER 6, OPPOSITION LIBERALS AND CHU ASKED FOR SPECIAL MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER TO DISCUSS ENERGY CRISIS. IN PRESS COMMUNIQUE, VVD AND CHU CLAIMED THERE HAD BEEN INSUFFICIENT TIME TO DISCUSS GON ME POLICY AND OIL BOYCOTT IN SECOND CHAMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEBATE. SPECIAL SESSION WITH PM AND FONMIN DESIGNED TO CLARIFY SITUATION AND TO ALLOW OPPOSITION TO OFFER SUGGESTIONS ON COPING WITH BOYCOTT. VVD FLOOR LEADER WIEGEL SAID HE WAS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED BY CONTRADICTION AND UNCLEAR STATEMENTS BY VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE CURRENT CRISIS. OPPOSITION LEADER REFUSED TO GO INTO MORE DETAIL ON WHAT OPPOSITION HOPED TO ACCOMPLISH IN SPECIAL MEETING IN VIEW OF "DELICATE NATURE OF THE SITUATION."

3. OPPOSITION'S CALL FOR PRIVATE SESSION IN CONSIDERABLE CONTRAST WITH POSITION IT HAS TAKEN IN THE PARLIAMENT ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS. IN THE OCTOBER 31 DEBATE ON THE OIL BOYCOTT (THE HAGUE 4806), OPPOSITION WAS ALMOST SILENT AFTER BEING REMINDED OF WIEGEL'S STATEMENT OF UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR THE ISRAELIS IN DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT BUDGET OCTOBER 9-11 (THE HAGUE 4536). IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEBATE OF NOVEMBER 28-29 (THE HAGUE 5258), THE OPPOSITION WAS CRITICAL OF WAY GON PRESENTED ITS ME POLICY BUT HAD NO SUBSTANTIVE DISAGREEMENT WITH CONTENT POLICY. ONLY CHU FLOOR LEADER KRUISINGA SUGGESTED FOREIGN MINISTER'S DISCOURTEOUS RECEPTION OF ARABS HAD LED TO OIL BOYCOTT BUT HE LATER WITHDREW THIS CHARGE. REACTING TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE ON THE ENERGY CRISIS (THE HAGUE 5273), THE OPPOSITION CRITICIZED THE VAGUENESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S EXPLANATION BUT AGAIN REFRAINED FROM CRITICISM OF SUBSTANCE OF GON'S ME POLICY. IN THE MOST RECENT PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE ON MIDDLE EAST POLICY DECEMBER 5 (THE HAGUE 5332) THE OPPOSITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAS AGAIN CRITICAL OF SHORTCOMINGS IN THE PRESENTATION OF DUTCH POLICY AND DIPLOMATIC FREE-WHEELING BY PM AND ECON MIN LUBBERS BUT AGAIN HAD NO CRITICISM ABOUT DIRECTION OR SUBSTANCE OF POLICY. OPPOSITION DS-70 IS STRONGLY PRO-ISRAEL AND HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT'S ME EFFORTS.

4. VAN DER STOEL'S OWN COLLEAGUES IN LABOR PARTY HAVE BEEN MOST CRITICAL OF SUBSTANTIVE ASPECTS OF HIS MIDDLE EAST POLICY. IN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES CITED ABOVE IT HAS BEEN LABOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN (CHAIRMAN OF THE SECOND CHAMBER FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE), DANKERT, WHO HAS CRITICIZED THE GON'S EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THAT THERE HAS BEEN ON CHANGE OR AT LEAST EVOLUTION IN ME POLICY. DANKERT CONTENDS THERE HAS BEEN QUALITATIVE CHANGE. DANKERT HAS BEEN BACKED BY HIS PARTY FLOOR LEADER VAN THIJN, A PRO-ISRAEL STALWART. THE KVP (SECOND LARGEST PARTY IN THE COALITION AND THE NATION) HAS CONSISTANTLY SUPPORTED GON ME POLICY OR AT LEAST GIVEN IT BENEFIT OF DOUBT.

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5. WHILE COOPERATION WITHIN THE COALITION WAS ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY GOVT'S THREAT TO RESIGN OVER THE WEALTH TAX MEASURE ON NOV 27 (THE HAGUE 5208), THERE ARE NO SIGNS THE CURRENT OIL CRISIS HAS CAUSED NEW FRICTION WITHIN COALITION. THE CABINET APPEARS TO BE ON THE SAME MIDDLE EAST WAVE LENGTH. THERE HAVE BEEN CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGES IN THE COALITION'S COMPOSITION IN RECENT

WEEKS FROM ARP FLOOR LEADER AANTJES AND FROM THE LIBERALS' WIEGEL. AANTJES, WHO IS UNDER INTERNAL PRESSURE FROM BIESHEUVEL WING OF HIS PARTY, FIRST SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO LEFT WING PARTIES (PPR AND D-66) LEAVE THE COALITION AND THAT THEIR MINISTRIES BE ALLOCATED TO THE ARP AND KVP. AANTJES LATER SUGGESTED THAT GIVEN THE OIL BOYCOTT THE CHU BE BROUGHT INTO THE CABINET BY DEPRIVING THE PPR OF ONE OF ITS MINISTERSHIPS. AANTJES' SUGGESTIONS WERE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND BY BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT. THE CONSERVATIVE DAILY TELEGRAAF AND NATIONAL WEEKLY ELSEVIERS, STRONG OPPONENTS OF DEN UYL REGIME, HAVE SUGGESTED PM

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AND HIS COLLEAGUES MAKE WAY FOR NATIONAL FIGURES ABOVE PARTY WHO COULD BETTER COPE WITH OIL CRISIS. NAMES MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE PRIME MINISTERS WERE NATIONAL BANK PRESIDENT ZIJLSTRA AND DE POUS, CHAIRMAN OF THE SER. ALL SUCH SUGGESTIONS HAVE BEEN REJECTED BY PRINCIPAL POLITICAL LEADERS ANDRIESEN OF THE KVP AND VAN THIJN OF LABOR WHO COMMENT SUCH A CHANGE OF GOVT COULD NOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT NEW ELECTIONS AND THE LAST THING THE NATION NEEDS NOW ARE NEW ELECTIONS AND ANOTHER PROTRACTED FORMATION. IN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED DEC 7 ANDRIESEN SAID FLATLY "AT THIS MOMENT I HAVE NO NEED FOR A CABINET OF DIFFERENT COMPOSITION WITH A BROAD NATIONAL BASE."

7. COMMENT: AS POINTED OUT IN THE MESSAGES CITED PREVIOUSLY, THE OIL BOYCOTT UP UNTIL NOW HAS MUTED THE OPPOSITION AT LEAST IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ARENA. THE OPPOSITION, ESPECIALLY THE VVD AND CHU, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT THE BOYCOTT FOR WHATEVER IT IS WORTH, BUT SO FAR HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO DO SO OPENLY IN PARLIAMENT. WIEGEL'S CALL FOR A SPECIAL MEETING WITH PM AND FONMIN SUGGESTS, HOWEVER, HE MAY BE PREPARING TO ABANDON THIS POLICY. THE GIVE COALITION POLITICAL PARTIES SEEM CONVINCED OF THE NEED FOR COHESIVENESS. WHILE THERE IS SOME SENTIMENT FOR MORE BALANCE VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL IN THE LABOR PARTY, THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IS IN COMMAND AND FIRMLY BACKS THE GOVT POLICY. THE INTRODUCTION OF RATIONING ON JAN 7 COULD CHANGE THINGS ESPECIALLY IF RATIONING IS ACCOMPANIED BY SHORTAGES OF HEATING OIL, ETC. THE DEN UYL GOVT WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE NO MATTER WHAT IT HAS SAID OR DONE. AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE AVERAGE DUTCHMAN REMAINS STRONGLY PRO-ISRAEL AND DISINCLINED TO SEE THEIR GOVT ABASE ITSELF TO ARABS FOR OIL. THERE IS NO REPEAT NO GROUND SWELL SUPPORT FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN GON ME POLICY. CONSTRAINTS WHICH HAVE BEEN CITED IN PREVIOUS REPORTING AS BAR TO EARLY ELECTIONS, I.E., KVP'S DESIRE TO RECOVER FROM NOV 1972 ELECTORAL DEBACLE, AS WELL AS DISINCLINATION TO BETRAY PRESENT PARTNERS AND RE-EMBRACE MUCH STRONGER AND MORE DEMANDING LIBERAL PARTY, STILL ARE OPERATIVE. ARAB OIL OR RATHER ABSENCE OF SAME COULD CONCEIVABLY CHANGE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION HERE DRASTICALLY BUT AS YET THERE NO SIGNS THAT IT IS DOING SO OR INDEED THAT IT WILL.

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